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March 26, 1959

MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT  
March 26, 1959 - 9:00 AM

Others present: Vice President Nixon  
Secretary Herter  
Secretary Quarles  
General Twining  
Mr. McCone  
Mr. Allen Dulles  
Mr. Merchant  
Mr. Gordon Gray  
General Goodpaster  
Major Eisenhower



Mr. Gray opened by explaining to the President that the State and Defense Departments were coordinating on a couple of subjects, such as reunification of Germany, European security, and contingency planning. The purpose of requesting this meeting is to obtain additional guidance in preparation for the foreign ministers talks to begin on March 31st.

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Mr. Herter stated that he just wanted the President to know of the potential difficulty.

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Mr. Herter then explained a rather gloomy eventuality which has come to our attention with regard to the four-power working group that functioned in Paris. The atmosphere has not been conducive to the most constructive work. This has been due to a series of peculiar circumstances with regard to the other nations represented on this group.

Accordingly, Mr. Herter said we will not learn much until the foreign ministers meeting here in Washington. The President agreed that since many of the delegates to the foreign ministers meeting are en route, there is little that can be done to rectify this situation until they arrive here.

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Mr. Herter then referred to the U.S. draft of a phased plan for reunification of Germany. This includes some proposals which impinge on the interests of the Department of Defense. They are anxious not to address any military disengagement arrangements without

corresponding political agreements resulting in an over-all settlement. The President stated that this has been our position for six years, that we can unify Germany only under the umbrella of a general agreement. Mr. Herter agreed that our four-stage plan does represent an over-all plan. To address Berlin by itself would be a retreat from this position. The President reiterated that our goal is for settlement of the German problem through a peace treaty with all of Germany. This would be followed by disarmament negotiations. To the President's inquiry as to where the U.S. draft position will be tabled, Mr. Merchant and Mr. Herter indicated that it will be presented at the May 11th foreign ministers meeting, at which time the Western powers should table their comprehensive Western position. For the time being, in our March 31st meeting with the Western foreign ministers, we will deal primarily with principles rather than details of implementation.

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Mr. Herter then reviewed the schedule of action which includes the Western foreign ministers meeting March 31-April 1, the meeting of the NATO Council April 2-4, the reconvening of the working group in early April, to complete its work by April 20, and subsequent consideration by the Western governments on April 27, all culminating in the molding of our position for the foreign ministers meeting of May 11th.

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Mr. Gray then asked Mr. Herter to outline the decisions we hope to reach this next week. Mr. Herter answered that our primary problem is that of the relationship of the GDR to the Soviets. The American position is that we will deal with the GDR at check points only with an acknowledged agency relationship between them and the Soviets. Otherwise, we insist on a status quo. The British, on the other hand, would like to see a new contractual agreement between the occupying powers and the Germans. This surprised the President a little bit. He had understood that the British desired only an amendment or codicil. However, he admitted that our viewpoint on this matter is not vital if we maintain essentially our same pre-1959 rights with a couple of amendments and with the name of a new contractual agreement.

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Mr. Quarles stated that he had been surprised when, at the Macmillan talks, he had learned that the 1949 agreement merely reverted to our pre-blockade status, which had been expressed in extremely vague terms. Mr. Quarles suggested that this fact would argue in favor of a completely new codification of our rights. The President, backed up by Mr. Merchant, disagreed with the impression that the rights as spelled out in the pre-1949 status had been vague. The President's understanding, in which Mr. Merchant concurred, was that our rights of unhindered access were quite clear in those arrangements. Mr. Merchant added, however, that the matter of how to exercise those rights had not been adequately spelled out.

At this point Mr. Dulles brought up the question of our views with regard to the rights of commercial traffic. This is a most vital point, in his opinion, since a garrison lift as such would be extremely easy to maintain.

Mr. Dulles said that he did not recommend bringing this matter up, but felt we should keep it in mind.

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The President then called attention to his understanding of the British concern with regard to interference on access routes. They fear, not an abrupt action in which the GDR would be placed in a position of making the first overt move, but rather a foot-dragging type of interference with the routes. All agreed.

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There was some discussion then of the President's schedule, in which Mr. Herter expressed the hope of seeing the President prior to the March 31 foreign ministers meeting. Mr. Gray indicated that in meetings between State and Defense, the matters that must move to agreement will be identified. Probably a small group will meet with the

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President either Easter Sunday, March 29, or Monday evening March 30.

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The President then asked for opinions on the subject of the efficacy of the four-power working group since they have had difficulties up to this time. He questioned how well they will perform when they meet again in April. In the discussion which followed, it was concluded that the difficulties which have beset the four-power working group up to this time will be largely overcome by the time they meet again. In addition, they will have the benefit of additional guidance stemming from the meeting of the foreign ministers. The President then directed that we make a study of the history of the four-power working group and from that study identify the items on which we must reach decision. We should also identify what our proposal has been on each, even though those proposals have not been commented on satisfactorily by the other powers. The results should be studied by State and Defense. Mr. Merchant assured the President that a paper is already in existence which does just this, and it is being sent this afternoon to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for study. The purpose of this paper is a briefing for Mr. Herter for the foreign ministers meeting. Mr. Gray added that the working group had actually identified about fourteen areas to be considered.

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Mr. Quarles then brought up the matter of a zone of limited armaments. He admitted that he had seen no cables to this effect, but he had read the press conference conducted by de Gaulle in the morning paper. It appeared to Mr. Quarles that de Gaulle had opposed measures on which Macmillan had staked his political fate. The President remarked that de Gaulle is in a poor position to play the star supporter of NATO (referring to the declared intention of withdrawing the fleet from NATO command in time of war). Mr. Quarles, however, added that on this particular matter of thinning out forces, he agrees with de Gaulle in opposing the idea. While not disagreeing with this viewpoint, the President pointed out that he had discussed with Macmillan the virtues of finding some way of implementing a mutual inspection system if only as a gesture to the world. Something of this sort might represent a start.

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Here the Vice President inserted the impressions he had received from a conversation at a dinner the other evening, primarily from Representative McCormack. Mr. McCormack had expressed the view that any form of disengagement such as proposed by the Rapaki Plan would be unacceptable. However, some proposal regarding the "freezing" of forces in Germany might be considered. The President agreed and mentioned to Mr. Merchant that in his position paper, which the President had referred to before, we should show some flexibility, and consider not only our optimum position, but also a possible fallback. He then mentioned in passing once more that the news with regard to the ineffectuality of the working group had been most disappointing. Mr. Herter assured the President that this was not the fault of the U.S. delegation.



Mr. McCone then inserted a point on the matter of reunification of Germany. Based on the extensive time which he himself had spent in Germany in a private capacity, he had become convinced that the attitude of the Germans is that the problem of German reunification is theirs. In this regard, the German businessmen have shown much concern over the attitude of the Adenauer government. (He mentioned a Mr. Beitz, General Manager of Krupp.) Mr. McCone feels that the recent flexibility shown by Adenauer is the result of pressure from German business. To this Mr. Herter mentioned the proposal which has been made by the West German government. It bears strong resemblance to the U.S. "four-stage" proposal, but the conditions which it lays down are so stringent as to require the GDR to be in the Western camp in order to implement it. The President agreed that the series of "provided that's" leaves no chance for German acceptance. Mr. McCone repeated his impression that the Germans regard their reunification as their own private problem. He recommends that the position of the Germans in the entire matter be kept "out in front" during negotiations. If von Brentano is now being forced out of his job, Mr. McCone feels that this eventuality is due to pressures exerted by German business. Mr. Dulles interjected the opinion that the attitude which Mr. McCone had witnessed is not universally held in Germany. The President repeated that our position has consistently favored free elections in Germany. In this we have learned from the experience of the Versailles Treaty, in which conditions were imposed on Germany from without. Therefore, our initial steps should point to some progress toward the place where the

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Germans can then take care of the matter themselves. Mr. Quarles added the thought that the Russians -- and probably the British and French -- are most skeptical of giving the Germans their heads, for fear of the consequences to the world if the Germans were free to pursue any courses they desire. Mr. Dulles added that the position of Beitz is wild. He has proposals for incorporating trade with everybody, etc. Mr. Dulles had had a lengthy discussion with him recently and felt that his views generally do not merit very weighty consideration.

The President completed the discussion by reiterating our desire to create a good atmosphere for the Germans to work in, which would not be conducive to the rise of another Hitler. Unfortunately, we are still, after fourteen years, in the position of conquerors.

There was then a brief discussion on the subject of participation of the Poles and Czechs and Italians in the May 11 conference. The President felt that if we admit them initially in the position of mere observers, we are asking for trouble from them. He felt, however, that they might be brought in at a later stage. Mr. Herter stated that what the Russians are really looking for is the principle of equality of representation.

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There was then another brief discussion of the working group in which the view was expressed that this body will find much better results with the benefit of the guidance coming from the next foreign ministers meeting.

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The President then conducted a brief discussion with Mr. Herter on the subject of the NATO festivities celebrating the tenth anniversary, to be held early in April. He expressed some annoyance at the degree to which he has been required to participate personally.

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The President terminated the meeting by requesting State and Defense to cooperate closely with Mr. Gray in the formulation of our position

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paper for the March 31 foreign ministers meeting. He expressed the possibility of making that paper a formal NSC record.

*John S. D. Eisenhower* b.  
John S. D. Eisenhower



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